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In defence of Jar Jar Binks | Den of Geek

By Bryan Young

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- Home
- Movies
- In defence of Jar Jar Binks

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| Comments count:0

I've been meaning to write some detailed essays explaining why the *Star Wars* prequels are, indeed, as excellent as I say they are. I've given a lot of thought to how to approach the systemic defense of the prequels and, like all great battle plans, I'm going to shore up the weakest spot first: Jar Jar Binks.

I understand a lot of you have a deep and festering outrage for so outward a clown being included in our beloved *Star Wars* movies. To tell the truth, I find Jar Jar just as obnoxious as you guys

probably do. But that doesn't mean I don't like him and it certainly doesn't mean that he doesn't serve a specific and brilliant purpose to the added benefit of the *Star Wars* saga.

I'm not going to try to convince you guys to like Jar Jar Binks, but at the very least, I'd like you to agree that for the stories George Lucas planned to tell with him as a central character (*The Phantom Menace* and *Attack Of The Clones*), Jar Jar was a vital part of the story and fit in with the archetypes of story and myth that Lucas based ALL of the *Star Wars* movies on.

Jar Jar Binks is the clown of the *Star Wars* films. And it makes sense to have him feature prominently in the first act. Looking to Shakespeare's *The Merchant Of Venice*, we see Lancelot the Clown featuring prominently in the early act of the play, providing useful commentary, lessons, and above all, laughs and largely disappearing later in the body of the work. Jar Jar works the same way, providing those laughs in the first movie, moving on to another purpose until disappearing completely by the middle of the saga. Clowns aren't anything new to drama. They've appeared back as far as our history of theatre goes. Why should George Lucas be demonized for remaining consistent with his use of classic myth, drama, and archetype? Jar Jar is the sad bunny you help on the

side of the road who gives you the magic beans to slay the dragon at the end of the journey.

As far as in *The Phantom Menace*, Jar Jar is supposed to be annoying, and funny to the kids. That's the point. We need to see past people for their annoyance and look at their inherent worth. Jar Jar saved the day and brought two nations of people together because just one person saw through the fog of annoyance. It's a valuable lesson that would be well learned by those who seem to have the most hatred for Jar Jar.

That's one of the strongest morals to be learned in *The Phantom Menace*, and that's why I'll stand up for Jar Jar.

Because of his unifying nature in *The Phantom Menace*, he was promoted from clumsy annoyance to Senate representative in *Attack Of The Clones*. His role in the second episode of the *Star Wars* saga was particularly poignant for a number of reasons and explored how even the most well-meaning person can, by no fault of anything but his intention to do the right thing, be manipulated into perpetrating a great evil. In being made to feel that authorizing an army for the Chancellor was the right thing to do, he was complicit in the eventual destruction of the Republic.

This is an excellent lesson to be learned from Jar Jar in the *Star Wars* films, and it turned out to be disturbingly prescient. Six months after the release of *Attack Of The Clones*, the United States Congress unwittingly pulled a Jar Jar and gave George W. Bush the same war authority powers Palpatine was given and in another six months the United States would be embroiled in its longest, most senseless war to date.

My last point is this: You'll always hear people say, "I hate Jar Jar," and "Jar Jar annoyed me," and, "Could someone please kill that obnoxious Gungan?" But think of this: how often do you hear people say, "I hated Jar Jar because he looked fake," or, "I disliked Jar Jar because he didn't interact with his environment well?" Not very often. The team at Industrial Light and Magic created the first all-CG character so convincingly that his physical presence was never the issue with fans, merely those choking on their own hubris.

Now, you can still hate Jar Jar if you want to, but I think it's pretty clear that he worked for specific purposes in the films, whether you liked it or not. And if you can't at least admit to this stuff, your inability to like the prequels has far more to do with a personal problem than with the actual films themselves.

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